

Message Text

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SUBJECT: VATICAN CONCERN FOR DEVELOPMENTS IN ZAIRE

1. AT CONCLUSION FEB 5 CONVERSATION ON UNRELATED SUBJECTS, ARCHBISHOP CASAROLI, VATICAN "FOREIGN MINISTER," SAID HE WANTED US TO KNOW THAT ZAIRE TOPS LIST OF VATICAN PREOCCUPATIONS FOR LIFE OF CHURCH AND IS DEEPLY TROUBLING POPE PAUL. VATICAN SEES AN EXPLOSIVE SITUATION DEVELOPING IN ZAIRE, CAPABLE OF UNLEASING CIVIL DISORDER WHICH COULD EASILY AFFECT NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. NATURALLY, OF PRIME CONCERN TO CHURCH, IS WHAT THEY CALL PROCESS OF "DE-CHRISTIANIZATION" BEGUN BY MOBUTU AND ITS LIKELY IMPACT IN NEIGHBORING STATES WHICH OFTEN IMPRESSED BY ZAIRIAN EXAMPLE. CASAROLI SAID IT VITAL TO KNOW WHO IS REALLY BEHIND MOBUTU AND WHETHER HE BEING PUSHED TO HIS PRESENT EXCESSES OR ARE THEY HIS OWN CREATION. RUMORS OF GROWING CHICOM INFLUENCE IN ZAIRE PARTICULARLY DISTRESSING TO VATICAN AND CASAROLI DOES NOT EXCLUDE THAT CHINESE AND ZAIRIANS SYMPATHETIC TO THEM MAY BE ENCOURAGING MOBUTU'S EXCESSES WITH INTENTION OF OVERTHROWING OR KILLING HIM AT CRITICAL MOMENT AND THEN MOVING TO EXPLOIT CHAOTIC SITUATION WHICH WOULD FOLLOW.

2. CASAROLI SAID PRO-NUNCIO ANTONETTI FINDS HIMSELF IN DELICATE AND ISOLATED POSITION IN KINSHASA, HIS ACCESS TO LEADING PERSONALITIES BEING COMPLETELY NIL. HE DOES, HOWEVER, HAVE GOOD

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RELATIONS WITH ZAIRIAN HIERARCHY, ALTHOUGH GOVERNMENT HAS RECENTLY

CRITICIZED STATEMENT OF BISHOPS WHO, ON DEPARTING A MEETING WITH NUNCIO, OMITTED ANY REFERENCE TO MOBUTU'S BEING A PRACTICING CATHOLIC. IN THIS ELECTRIFIED ATMOSPHERE, CASAROLI FEARS THAT GOZ MAY DECIDE TO EXPEL PRO-NUNCIO ON SLIGHTEST PRETEXT. CASAROLI WONDERED WHAT SORT OF ACCESS OUR EMBASSY NOW ENJOYED WITH RANKING ZAIRIANS.

3. VATICAN MOST HOPEFUL THAT ZAIRIAN BISHOPS CAN MOVE TO FORM A UNITED FRONT IN THEIR DEALING WITH GOZ AND IN THEIR PUBLIC STATEMENTS. CARDINAL MALULA IS "STRANGE INDIVIDUAL," NOT TERRIBLY STRONG AND UNABLE TO UNITE THE HIERARCHY. NEWLY-ELECTED PRESIDENT OF BISHOPS CONFERENCE IS ONLY A BISHOP, CASAROLI SAID, BUT IS FORCEFUL AND HOPEFULLY CAPABLE OF MOLDING BISHOPS INTO SOLID FRONT.

4. VATICAN HAS NO INTENTION OF ENCOURAGING TEACHING MISSIONARIES AND CLERGY TO WITHDRAW FROM ZAIRE, PREFERRING TO LEAVE THEM TO PERFORM WHATEVER USEFUL SERVICES THEY CAN FOR ZAIRIAN PEOPLE. CASAROLI STRESSED THAT IT NOT CHURCH POLICY UNILATERALLY TO ABANDON A COUNTRY.

5. COMMENT: FOR SOME TIME NOW OUR VATICAN CONTACTS HAVE BEEN EXPRESSING THEIR FEARS ABOUT PROCESS OF DE-CHRISTIANIZATION IN ZAIRE AND ALSO IN CHAD. THEY HAVE POINTED OUT TO US THAT BEYOND SIGNIFICANCE FOR CHRISTIAN PRESENCE IN AFRICA, THIS TREND COULD BE DISASTROUS FOR DEMOCRATIC AND WESTERN INTERESTS IN GENERAL, AS ONLY COMMUNISTS AND THIER ALLIES STAND TO PROFIT BY SUCH A TREND. WE WERE ABLE TO PROVIDE CASAROLI WITH A MINIMUM OF INFORMATION ON ZAIRE,BUT ARE SURE HE WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE OUR ESTIMATE OF SITUATION, FUTURE OUTLOOK, AND WHOM WE THINK MIGHT BE SUPPORTING MOBUTU'S PRESENT POLICIES. VOLPE

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